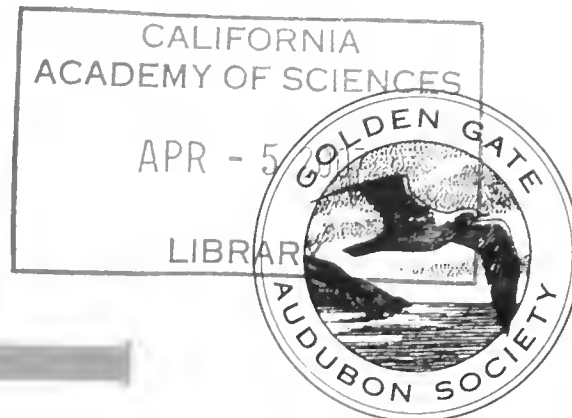


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VOL. 92 NO. 3 APRIL 2007

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



FOUNDED 1917



Noreen Weeden

Volunteers restoring California Quail habitat at the Presidio, San Francisco.

Spring Party Recognizes Golden Gate Audubon Volunteers

To express our appreciation for the tremendous efforts of our dedicated volunteers, Golden Gate Audubon will hold our annual Volunteer Thank-You Party on Sunday, May 6, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m., at the Tern Picnic Area at Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park in Oakland. Whether you have come out only once for a habitat restoration workday or have led field trips for years, we invite you to join us. The event is free for all Golden Gate Audubon volunteers and their guests.

In addition to serving a delicious lunch and beverages, we will host bird walks along the MLK shoreline and award prizes to volunteers. It's our way of thanking you for your invaluable work in support of Bay Area birds and other wildlife.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Golden Gate Audubon. They lead field trips around the Bay Area and beyond, introduce schoolchildren to nature and the wonder of birds, represent Golden Gate Audubon at public meetings, conduct bird censuses, and work hands-on to restore critical habitat for California Quail, California Least Terns, and other species.

Our volunteer corps of nearly 1,500 individuals—including more than 120 who have joined us since last summer—make Golden Gate Audubon a leading conservation organization in the San Francisco Bay Area. These same volunteers are

VOLUNTEERS continued on page 3

Bird Populations: Winners and Losers

When Golden Gate Audubon began as the Audubon Association of the Pacific, the 20th century and the Christmas Bird Count were seventeen years old. San Francisco's population was a half million, and fast-growing Alameda County had 300,000 residents. There was no Caldecott Tunnel connecting Alameda to Contra Costa County and no bridges crossing the San Francisco Bay. Trains, the common form of mass transportation, were powered by steam.

Then, as now, the Central Bay had a range of diverse habitats, from the Farallon Islands to the semi-arid hills of the East Bay, from saltwater marshes to freshwater lakes, from sand dunes and oak scrub to redwood-shaded canyons. Changes to the environment and thus to the native bird population had begun thousands of years ago when Native American hunters diminished the population of the birds best suited for food, especially ducks, geese, and grouse. Fire was used to control forest spread and maintain certain plants. With colonization came faster and broader impacts. The Spanish missions in the late 18th century turned their livestock loose to graze—the wild boar remains at large in Bay Area wildlands. Eurasian plants like fennel and mustard escaped mission gardens.

The Gold Rush and American control of California brought greater changes. Numerous exotic plants were introduced: Some, like

BIRD POPULATIONS continued on page 10



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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

The Gull is published nine times per year by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The deadline for submissions is five weeks prior to the month of publication. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The post office does not forward *The Gull*.

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Nature Store hours: Monday - Friday, 9 - 12, 1 - 5

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Golden Gate Audubon Celebrates Earth Day

With the rainy season winding down and spring bringing new plant growth and birds to the Bay Area, April is the perfect month to celebrate Earth Day and Golden Gate Audubon's dedication to the conservation of Bay Area birds and other wildlife. Please join us for one or more of these Earth Day events.

On Saturday, April 21, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Golden Gate Audubon will host our Earth Day event, Make the City Safe for Wildlife! We'll work at our Pier 94 wetlands restoration site in San Francisco, planting the tidal vegetation we've grown over the past few months, removing invasive weeds, and clearing out trash accumulated from the winter storms. Lots of birds are using the wetlands for nesting and feeding now, so be sure to bring your binoculars. If you'd like to help out, please contact me at mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295.

Golden Gate Audubon will sponsor booths and activities at several Bay Area events over the Earth Day weekend. On Saturday, April 21, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., stop by the Earth Stroll at Crissy Field in the Presidio, San Francisco. You can participate in a special fitness walk that brings local natural history to life, as well as enjoy games, music, and live animals. Planet-friendly goodies will be given to all who attend. In the East Bay, come to Berkeley Earth Day on Saturday, noon to 5 p.m., at Civic Center Park, Center Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, near the Downtown Berkeley BART station. Activities include poetry readings, dance performances, earth-friendly demonstrations, the Berkeley Farmers' Market, and a climbing wall.

The following day, Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., come get Caught Green Handed! at the San Francisco Zoo's Earth Day event, aimed at encouraging conservation action among Bay Area residents. The zoo is located at 1 Zoo Road, off Sloat Boulevard at the Great Highway.

If you'd like more information on any of these events, or would like to help us host a booth, please contact me at mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295.

by Michael Martin, Volunteer and Membership Development Coordinator

GGA's Birdiest City Competition—Just Two Weeks Away!

It's not too late to join local birders who have already signed up for the seventh annual America's Birdiest City/County Competition. Golden Gate Audubon is sponsoring San Francisco's inaugural entry in the event, held over a long weekend, April 13 to 16. During the fun contest, participants will try to document the most species within the city's boundaries in a 72-hour period, competing with other birders throughout the country in the Small Coastal City category.

Last year, Dauphin Island, Alabama, placed first in this category, with 170 species recorded. Given San Francisco's large avian diversity, we can achieve similar results—if enough birders participate. To maximize the results, our count will be held from 9 a.m. Friday, April 13, to 9 a.m., Monday, April 16. Most of the activity will take place on Saturday and Sunday. This should allow teams to find lingering winter birds, uncommon residents, and early spring arrivals.

Participants will be assigned specific areas to cover in the four-hour time slot(s) for which they register. We encourage birders of all skill levels to sign up; the more pairs of eyes in the field, the better. There is no charge to take part. If you're a beginner, you'll be teamed up with a more experienced observer. You can sign up for one or more four-hour count periods at www.goldengateaudubon.org or by calling 510.843.2222.



CONSERVATION CORNER

GGA VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS

Interested in being more active in Golden Gate Audubon? Become a volunteer! Volunteers are key to making GGA so effective at protecting Bay Area birds and wildlife. Volunteering with Golden Gate Audubon is also a great way to meet people with similar interests and passions. We look forward to seeing you at one of these events this spring.

Saturday, April 7

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Native plant propagation for the Pier 94 wetlands restoration. Literacy for Environmental Justice nursery, 1150 Carroll Ave., San Francisco.

Saturdays, April 14 and May 12

9 a.m. – noon

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at the Presidio. Natural Resources Field Office, 1539 Pershing Dr., San Francisco.

Wednesday, April 18

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at Harding Park. Parking lot at the corner of Sunset Blvd. and Lake Merced Blvd., San Francisco.

Saturday, April 28

9 a.m. – noon

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at Harding Park. Meet at the location above.

Saturday, April 28

noon – 4 p.m.

San Leandro Creek Watershed Festival. GGA will be represented at this event focusing on the conservation of creeks, lakes, and wetlands. Root Park, 14th St. and Hays St., San Leandro.

For more information on any of these activities or events, or for directions to any of the sites, please contact Michael Martin, Golden Gate Audubon's Volunteer and Membership Development Coordinator, at mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS

On Saturday, May 12, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Campaign for the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco will host a special event, *Creatures of the New Lagoon: Discover the Wild Side of the Palace of Fine Arts*. Golden Gate Audubon is one of the founding partners of the event, and we'll be hosting a booth, bird walks, and family activities for all those attending.

Creatures of the New Lagoon seeks to enhance Bay Area residents' understanding of the Palace Lagoon as a significant environmental resource. The lagoon was originally part of an ancient tidal wetland that extended from the present tidal pool at the Presidio's Crissy Field to an outlet near what is now Divisadero Street. Much of the wetland was filled as the city expanded, and then, in 1915, the lagoon was condensed to its present shape.

The lagoon has long hosted Whooper Swans, but today it supports a much greater diversity of wildlife. This freshwater lagoon in a dense urban setting is a critical stopping point for many birds along the Pacific Flyway. The lagoon also acts as a dynamic link with Alcatraz Island. During the day, Great Blue Herons and egrets fly to the lagoon from Alcatraz to feed. At night, they fly back to roost. Black-crowned Night-Herons follow an opposite path, flying from the lagoon to Alcatraz during the day to feed and back to the lagoon at night to rest.

We encourage you to attend *Creatures of the New Lagoon* and learn about the wetland's role in the urban environment, enjoy the family activities, and participate in one of our bird walks. Golden Gate Audubon volunteers Harry Fuller, Pam Llewellyn, and Joan Zawaski will lead four walks at the lagoon, one per hour on the half hour, beginning at 10.30 a.m. There will also be music, storytellers, food vendors, and a wildlife art contest, adding up to a great way to spend a Saturday.



Black-crowned Night-Heron.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service/Lee Karney

VOLUNTEERS from page 1

responsible for some of the greatest conservation victories in the Bay Area.

We encourage you to carpool or take public transportation to the volunteer party. If you drive, take I-880 in Oakland to the Hegenberger Road exit and head west toward the bay. Turn right onto Doolittle

Drive (Highway 61) and then right again onto Swan Way. Take your first left and follow the road to its end at Arrowhead Marsh and the Tern Picnic Area.

Alternatively, we will provide free shuttles from the Oakland Airport/Coliseum BART station to the picnic area for those of you taking the train. Just let me know in

your RSVP if you want to take advantage of our complimentary shuttle service.

If you can attend, please contact me by May 2 at mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295.

by Michael Martin, Volunteer and Membership Development Coordinator



BACKYARD BIRDER

MEG PAULETICH

What is the formula for attracting young people to bird-watching? There may be a slight genetic tendency, along with a built-in capacity for patience and an eye for detail. My mother was into wildflowers, so my interest may be related to an early exposure to nature. Both my children and grandchildren report bird sightings to me because they are aware of birds and know my interests. As a child, my son, Mike, came along when I counted birds in our neighborhood for the Christmas Bird Count and later he took a birding course in college. His children know the birds that visit the feeders in their yard.

For Christmas a year ago, we gave Mike's nine-year-old son, Evan, binoculars and the *Sibley Guide to Birds*. This year, I figured he was old enough to come along on the Christmas count. He spent a year studying the guide and has nearly worn it out, and his use of binoculars is improving. We started at 7 a.m., and when he had to quit at 3 p.m. to play basketball, he wasn't eager to leave. He's definitely hooked, so I'm happy that one out of four grandchildren will be my birding buddy.

Some children are ready to get serious even younger than 10, though the process is gradual. The Bay Area has wonderful natural history museums, some especially for children, and an ample choice of parks. When a child is ready to watch birds, you can start his first adventure in his own yard. Next, you might take him to a place such as a pond or lake where spotting birds is easier than in a wooded area where birds are often hidden. He can see ducks swimming and discover the many different types other than the ubiquitous Mallard. Most children already know a few birds by name, but correctly identifying a bird, such as a Western Scrub-Jay, takes time and experience. You can talk about why birds need certain features to feed, such as a sharp beak for a heron to spear fish. You can also point out that different birds are found in different habitats because of what they eat and where they nest.

Using binoculars with some confidence



Eleanor Bricetti/eleanorbricettiphotography.com

Introduce a child early to nature, and you may instill a lifelong passion.

requires practice. A bird seldom sits still for long, so a child must learn to look at the bird and quickly put her binoculars up to her eyes and focus. She may have only seconds to view the image. You can tell her what characteristics she should concentrate on in this brief time. General size is a good place to start. Is the bird bigger than a sparrow? As large as a robin? Then turn to the color and shape. What are the distinctive markings and where are they? What shape is the head? Is the beak fat and stubby, or sharp? She should start at the head and quickly look at the back and tail, then start at the head again and check out the throat, breast, and belly. All this needs to happen in a moment.

There are also behavioral clues: the bird's posture while perched or its method of flight, for instance, or its song, call, or scolding notes. Some of these characteristics can be readily discerned without binoculars.

All of these factors go into naming which treasure a young birder has found on the treasure hunt. Although it takes time before he can correctly identify a bird, once he gets to know local birds better, he can

determine if the bird is a raptor or a corvid, a species of woodpecker, or a sparrow, warbler, flycatcher, or thrush.

You may remember your own early experiences. The more you discovered, the more you wanted to learn. So you studied your field guide, and one day you found a bird new to you. You searched through other books to find out more about the bird. And then, yes—you got hooked on birding!

Teaching young birders proper etiquette is important, too, especially if they go on field trips. You can start with a few basic rules: Speak in a quiet voice. When on a field trip, be sure to let the leader lead while everyone else follows. Don't move your arms suddenly and point. Instead, use the face of a clock to describe location—"a small bird in the large oak tree straight ahead, at about three o'clock, perched at the tip of the large branch."

There are no guarantees that your enthusiasm for birds will catch fire with a young person, but it's a joy to pass the torch to a new generation. We need young people interested in preserving our environment. Sharing the wonders of the natural world with them is an ideal way to start.



SPEAKER SERIES

SARAH REED, COORDINATOR

Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., delicious snacks are served by hospitality coordinator Susanne Shields.

The Marbled Murrelet: Parting the Fog on the Fog Lark

Steve Beissinger

Berkeley: Thursday, April 19

Over the past decade, biologist Steve Beissinger and his graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley, have conducted seminal studies of the Marbled Murrelet in Central California. This endangered seabird, nicknamed the fog lark, was one of the last North American species to have its nest discovered, because the species nests high in the canopy of coastal old-growth redwood forests. After the nest was located, this little-known bird immediately became an important force in conservation policy throughout the Pacific Northwest. Steve's talk will focus on the natural history of this unique bird, the ways that biologists have studied its ecology, and the factors that have caused the species to decline.

Steve Beissinger, a professor of conservation biology, holds the A. Starker Leopold Chair of Wildlife Biology at U.C. Berkeley. He conducts field research on conservation biology and parental-care patterns in birds in California, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela. He serves on the board of directors of the National Audubon Society. Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin). Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.htm



Tom Hamer

Juvenile Marbled Murrelet on a nest.

Return of the Condor

John Moir

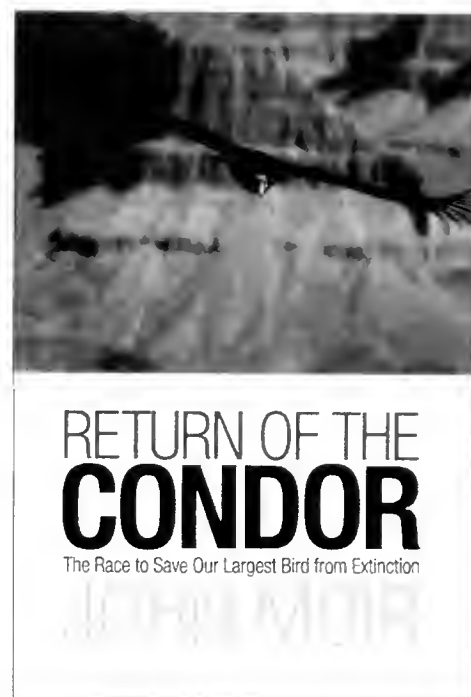
San Francisco: Tuesday, April 24

Award-winning science writer John Moir will tell the riveting story of the California Condor's dramatic rescue from the brink of extinction. By 1982, the bird's numbers had fallen to just 22 individuals. Moir, author of the new book *Return of the Condor: The Race to Save Our Largest Bird from Extinction*, will recount how a remarkable team of scientists carried out a plan to save the species—a plan that flew in the face of traditional condor conservation methods. The presentation includes rare photos that take you deep inside the world of the condor and the biologists who are working to save this iconic bird. John will also discuss how the condor's plight symbolizes a larger extinction crisis that is changing our planet.

John Moir has written about the condor recovery effort for years and is a member of the National Association of Science Writers and the Northern California Science Writers Association. For more information on his work, go online to <http://returnofthecondor.com>.

County Fair Building, San Francisco Botanical Garden, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue. at Lincoln Way.

Directions: www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html



Tales of Western Ornithologists

Harry Fuller

Friday, April 20, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Live Oak Recreation Center, Berkeley

Fee: \$10, GGA Supporting Members; \$15, nonmembers

Register by calling the GGA office, 510.843.2222

Wilson's Warbler, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Townsend's Warbler, Steller's Jay, Heermann's Gull, Lincoln's Sparrow, Bewick's Wren, Cassin's Finch—how did some of our favorite birds acquire their names? Behind these and other names are some fascinating stories. Harry Fuller will share his extensive knowledge of ornithological history, including the tangled tale of Anna's Hummingbird and what happened after an Italian surgeon on a French ship took the first specimen back to Europe from San Francisco. You'll hear about the man who made it to Alaska but died before he got home again, and the couple who never saw America, where their namesake birds live. Then there's the man who poisoned himself by handling bird skins preserved with arsenic powder and the one who appears as a character in *Two Years Before the Mast*.



Detailed trip descriptions are located on our website at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sunday, April 1, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley and Helen McKenna,
 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall,
 650.349.3780

Meet at front gate of garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This monthly trip is oriented toward helping beginners develop their skills in spotting and identifying the garden's birds.

Jewel Lake in Tilden Park

Berkeley

Friday, April 6, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156,
philajane6@yahoo.com

Meet at lot at north end of Central Park Dr. to see breeding birds. Some will be singing—Black-headed Grosbeaks, Wilson's Warblers, Warbling Vireos, and Swanson's Thrushes. Rain cancels.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturday, April 7, 10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis,
 SF Nature Education; Darin Dawson, SF
 Botanical Garden docent, 415.387.9160

Meet at front gate of garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Alcatraz Island

Thursday, April 12, 9:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Christian Hellwig, christian_hellwig@nps.gov;
 Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233 (no calls after 9 p.m.), kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

This monthly trip is offered exclusively to GGA Supporting Members and is limited to 10 participants. Expect to see numerous breeding birds: Western and California Gulls, Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots, Snowy Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and Black Oystercatchers. Reserve by contacting Tara Zuardo, GGA office manager, gga@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.2222. Once you have received

confirmation, book space on ferry with Alcatraz Cruises at 415.981.7625 or www.alcatrazcruises.com. Buy a ticket (\$21.75) for 9:30 a.m. Early Bird Tour. Ferry departs from Pier 33, near corner of Bay St. and Embarcadero. Each walk is about 1.5 hours, timed for return on 11:15 a.m. ferry. For directions to Pier 33, see January/February *Gull* or GGA website.

Landfill Loop

Richmond

Friday, April 13, 10 a.m. – noon

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001,
RLewis0727@aol.com

We'll walk a level trail that extends about 1.5 miles west into a marsh adjacent to a waste-processing area that attracts many gulls. We should see shorebirds, perhaps some in breeding plumage, and other marsh birds and waterbirds. High tide may result in some wet areas. This is one of the proposed areas for GGA's forthcoming Richmond Shoreline Census.

Take I-80 to Richmond Expressway. Turn west on Parr Blvd. and continue to end of Bay Trail Parking Area.

American River Trail

Sacramento County

Friday – Saturday, April 13 – 14 (Note:

One day earlier than in Jan/Feb *Gull*)

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233 (no calls after 9 p.m.), kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

On Friday, we'll leave from Emeryville Amtrak station for Sacramento (many birds can be seen from train) and then bike to Folsom on American River Trail, a fairly flat, 33-mi. trail rich in birdlife. Approximately 45 species were seen on October 2006 trip. We'll stay overnight in Folsom and at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday leave from Iron Point Light Rail Station for Sacramento to meet train for trip home. You may also drive to Sacramento. Recent cycling experience is a must to ensure stamina necessary for such a long trip. Trip is limited to 12 people. Advance registration with leader is required.



Lee Karney

Young Western Gull at Alcatraz Island.

Lake Merced— GGA 90th Anniversary Trip

San Francisco

Saturday, April 14, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Dan and Joan Murphy, 415.564.0074,
murphsf@comcast.net

Help celebrate GGA's 90th anniversary by joining Dan Murphy on a 4.5-mi. walk around Lake Merced to discuss conservation issues and to recount early days of birding in San Francisco. Audubon members have visited the lake since the beginnings of the Audubon Association of the Pacific. The *Gull*, which started publication in January 1919, carried reports of early trips to the lake, which took less than 45 minutes to reach from the Ferry Building. A survey of trip lists filed for GGA's first 25 years showed Lake Merced as Bay Area's most productive birding site. If you have journals, photos, maps, or information about birding at Lake Merced in the old days, please get in touch with leader.

Meet near the 1919 meeting site, which is now the intersection of Skyline Blvd. and Lake Merced Blvd. at northwest corner of lake. Be prepared to carry lunch and liquids since there are no food concessions at lake. Locating clean restrooms may be another problem. Of course, in 1919 there weren't any restrooms. Expect changing weather conditions, so dress in layers.

Orinda Connector Trail

Contra Costa County

Saturday, April 14, 8 a.m. – noon

Denise Wight, 510.547.6822,
blkittiwake@yahoo.com

Meet at small dirt parking lot off Bear Creek Rd. The Orinda Connector Trail (EBMUD) wanders through diverse habitats, including oak woodland, planted pines, open grassland, and creekside vegetation, terminating at a small marsh at base of Briones Dam.

Take Hwy. 24 east through Caldecott Tunnel and get off at Orinda exit. Turn left onto Camino Pablo and drive 1.6 miles to Bear Creek Rd. (light). Turn right, then immediately left into lot at northeast corner.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Friday, April 20, 8–10 a.m.

Charles Hibbard; Lewis Bellingham; Brian Fitch; Margaret Goodale, 415.554.9600 ext. 16, mgoodale@randallmuseum.org

Meet in front of Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, off Roosevelt. We'll enjoy views of the city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring hill-top scrub and south cliff.

Point Pinole

Richmond

Saturday, April 21, 9 a.m. – noon

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001,
RLewis0727@aol.com

Meet in parking lot for a walk along shoreline trail at low tide out to the point, where we'll look for shorebirds along the coastline. On the return inland, we'll seek out early migrants in trees. The 3-mi. walk is partly along beach. Bring lunch to eat upon return. Point Pinole is one of the proposed areas for GGA's forthcoming Richmond Shoreline Census.

From I-80, exit at Richmond Pkwy. and turn right onto Giant Hwy. Proceed to park entrance and parking lot; parking fee is \$5.

South Lake Merced– Western SF Ramble

San Francisco

Saturday, April 21, 8 a.m. – noon

Mark Eaton, 415.298.5128,
mark@markeaton.org

Meet at west end of concrete bridge that crosses South Lake Merced. Bridge is on John Muir Dr. .25 mi. northwest of intersection of John Muir and Lake Merced Blvd. We'll bird various locations depending on weather and mood of leader. Trip, held rain or shine, may involve significant walking, including off trail.

Pt. Reyes National Seashore 19th Annual All-Day Bird Blitz

Marin County

Saturday, April 21, 8 a.m.

Leon Abrams, 510.843.4107,
LeonAbrams@earthlink.net;
Cathy Purchis, catpur@value.net

Fast-paced, multihabitat, noncompeti-

tive trip covers Five Brooks Pond area, Limantour Spit, Drakes Bay, Fish Docks, and parts of Pt. Reyes, ending at Bear Valley. We expect to see approximately 100 species. Bring water and food; wear layered clothing. Cosponsored by GGA and National Park Service.

Meet at Five Brooks Trailhead parking lot, 3.5 miles south of Olema on west side of Hwy 1.

Merrie Way

San Francisco

Sunday, April 22, 8 a.m.

Harry Fuller, 415.344.2363,
anzatowhee@yahoo.com

Meet at Merrie Way, the unpaved parking lot at west end of Pt. Lobos above Cliff House at Land's End. Local birds will be nesting, including Pygmy Nuthatches and Red-tailed Hawks resident at Sutro Heights. We should hear the spring songs of finches, sparrows, and warblers. Pigeon Guillemot should be back. Email leader for transit information.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesday, April 25, 9 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066,
hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey,
510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue Sts. We will bird area near center, then go down to lake toward Embarcadero, or up path to Children's Fairyland.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into park on Perkins. Drivers can park on Bellevue, east of Perkins, within about 3 blocks of meeting place. Parking on Grand Ave. is metered; meters can be fed during walk. Parking at boathouse lot near Nature Center will cost \$3 for entry to access road.

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Fremont

Friday, April 27, 8:30 a.m. – noon

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001,
RLewis0727@aol.com

Meet at visitor center lot. We'll bird various habitats, looking for nesting waterfowl, waders, songbirds, and raptors.

Take I-880 to 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Head west and exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and go north 1 mi., then turn left on Patterson Ranch Rd. to Coyote Hills. Bring \$5 bill for parking kiosk.

See the Great Blue Herons at Golden Gate Park

Each year since 1994, Great Blue Herons have returned to Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park to court, mate, and raise their young. To date, the colony has been highly successful, fledging a total of 97 chicks. This year, the colony has at least six active nests.

On Thursday, April 12, 7:30 p.m., at the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, in San Francisco, Nancy DeStefanis, founding director of San Francisco Nature Education, will present slides of the 2006 heron colony. The evening will also include two films: *Heron Island*, by Judy Irving, and *Above the Nests*, by Nancy DeStefanis.

You can also observe the herons firsthand. For six Saturdays, April 14 – May 19, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., SF Nature interns will be at the lake with spotting scopes to offer a close view of the magnificent birds. A naturalist will lead a walk around Stow Lake and Strawberry Island from 10:30 a.m. until noon. To find the heron watch location, follow the signs from the Stow Lake Boathouse. The event is also sponsored by GGA.

The evening presentation and the heron watches are free. For more information, visit www.sfnature.org or call 415.387.9160.

FIELD TRIPS continued on page 8

Jewel Lake in Tilden Park

Saturday, April 28, 7:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Matt Rickets, msrparulid@sbcglobal.net

Meet in lot at north end of Central Park Dr. for a walk around lake to see breeding birds. We'll look for passerines and may also see Black-headed Grosbeaks, Wilson's Warblers, Warbling Vireos, and Swanson's Thrushes. Rain cancels.

Mines Road

Alameda County

Saturday, April 28, 8 a.m.

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,
davequady@att.net

This all-day trip will begin and end in Livermore. We expect to see Lewis's Woodpecker, Phainopepla, and Bullock's Oriole, among other species. Carpooling is encouraged to and from Livermore, and is essential during the day because of limited parking along route. Leader will provide directions and carpooling information. *Trip is limited to first 20 participants who sign up with leader beginning at 12:01 a.m. on April 2.*

Briones Regional Park

Contra Costa County

Sunday, April 29, 8 – noon

Rusty Scalf, rfscalf@sbcglobal.net

Meet at Bear Creek Rd. entrance to park.

Take Hwy. 24 east through Caldecott Tunnel and get off at Orinda exit. Turn left onto Camino Pablo and

Summer Classes in the Sierra

Two sessions of the popular class Birds of the Sierra will be offered again this year. Both will be held at and near Yuba Pass, between Sierra City and Sierraville.

The classes include field trips to different habitats in Sierra Valley and its surroundings. Birds we may see include many Sierra specialties: Swainson's Hawk, White-headed and Lewis's Woodpeckers, Williamson's Sapsucker, Calliope Hummingbird, Mountain Chickadee, Mountain Bluebird, Sage Thrasher, MacGillivray's and Hermit Warblers, Western Tanager, Green-tailed Towhee, and Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows.

Birds of the Sierra I, taught by Rusty Scalf and Bob Lewis, meets from 3 p.m. on Thursday, June 7, to noon on Sunday, June 10. **Birds of the Sierra II**, taught by Eddie Bartley and Bob Lewis, meets from 3 p.m. on Thursday, June 14, to noon on Sunday, June 17. Each class is limited to 35 people. The fee of \$75 also includes a lecture and dinner at San Francisco State University's Sierra Campus in Bassetts. Room and other meals are not included in the fee.

Registration for the classes begins on March 15 and continues through April 16. If the classes are oversubscribed, participation will be determined by a lottery. To be eligible for the lottery, signups must be received during this period. Each registrant may sign up for a maximum of two people by calling the GGA office at 510.843.2222.

GGA has booked the entire Sierra Valley Lodge in Calpine for students attending the class. If you wish to stay at the lodge, let us know when you register. Rooms are \$77 per night for two beds, \$66 for one. The quantity of rooms is limited, and class participants will be accommodated by lottery. There are other motels in the area; reservations should be made early. We will confirm registrations by April 20. Other details will follow.

drive for 1.6 mi. to Bear Creek Rd. (light). Turn right and go about 5 mi., passing Briones Reservoir on left. Entrance is on right. Turn left past park kiosk to lot. \$

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Shasta County

Friday–Sunday, June 22 – 24

Dan Murphy, 415.564.0074,
murphsf@comcast.net

Join Dan and Joan Murphy for the

annual Lassen field trip. Camping facilities are available at Manzanita Lake Campground—loops A and C by reservation only, loops B and D on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations can be made online at www.recreation.gov or by calling 877.444.6777. Those planning on staying at Hat Creek Resort in Old Station should call 800.568.0109. Trip details will be in the Summer Gull.

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

GOLDEN EAGLE (\$1000 AND MORE)

Bob Bennett, Scott Benson, Jean Conner

PEREGRINE FALCON (\$500 TO \$999)

Diane Ichiyasu, Mary Schaefer

LEAST TERN (\$200 TO \$499)

Terry & Zeo E. Coddington, Lois Hayn, William Hudson,
Robert A. Lewis (*Field Trips*), Kevin H. Owen

CLAPPER RAIL (\$100 TO \$199)

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Riddell Jr., James N. & Nita D. Roethe, Michael Sanchez (*Eco-Oakland Program – Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign*), Lionel Schour, Leonard Schwab & Rita Brenner, Edward & Dale Sickles, Linda Swanson, Jan Kathleen Tomsic, Deborah W. Trotter, Anna Wilcox, Matthew B. & JoAnn K. Zlatunich

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IN KIND

Binoculars: Constance Fraser

IN MEMORY OF

Ira Davidoff: Shelly Horwitz

IN HONOR OF

Elizabeth Murdock: Dr. & Mrs. Murdock
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GRANTS

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation: Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge



LOONS TO DUCKS

Overwintering waterfowl remained a primary reporting theme in February. On the 21st, a Red-Necked Grebe made a rare inland foray to Shadow Cliffs RP, ALA (Art Edwards). Birders had their pick of Harlequin Duck locales. In addition to SF's Presidio coastline, a female was reported through Feb. 12 on Tomales Bay, MRN (RS; mob); off Heron's Head, SF, through the 24th (HL; mob); at Mussel Rock in Pacifica, SM, on the 17th (JRy); and off Pt. San Quentin, MRN, on the 24th (JRi). February was an equally banner month for Long-tailed Ducks, with 3 continuing birds at Princeton Harbor, SM, plus a female at Hog Island Oyster Co., MRN, through the 3rd (RS); a solo duck at Hayward RS, ALA, on the 4th (BRi); and up to 4 Long-tailed Ducks around Mile Rock and Golden Gate, SF, through the 17th (AH; ADM, BF).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

A Northern Goshawk appears to be lurking in SF and northern SM. In addition to sporadic reports in Dec. and Jan., a goshawk was observed on Feb. 23, flying north over Collins Ave. in Colma, SM (ADM). On Feb. 27, a Pectoral Sandpiper turned up at the Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center, ALA (PD). A Rock Sandpiper continued its regular appearances, through at least the 18th, at the rocky reefs and tide pools below the Half Moon Bay Golf Course, SM (mob).

A seawatch from Pigeon Pt., SM, was rewarded with a Pomarine Jaeger on the 13th (RT). Gull watchers this month were occasionally successful in picking out a Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*) from the thousands of regulars loafing on Venice SB in Half Moon Bay, SM (mob). But the Slaty-backed phenomenon is not limited to HMB, as evidenced by the report of 3 Slaty-backed at the MRN Rod and Gun Club pier at Pt. San Quentin, MRN, on the 19th (TE; mob), along with recent reports from NW CA.

This winter has also brought a remarkable influx of Glaucous Gulls with continuing



Short-eared Owl.

Bob Lewis

birds at most of January's reported locales. In addition, Glaucous Gulls were ID'd at Ann Sobrato High School in Morgan Hill, SCL, on the 10th (SR); at Bodega Harbor, SON, on the 12th (WW; mob); and at Pigeon Pt., SM, on the 19th (RT). Solo Ancient Murrelets were espied from Sutro Baths, SF, on the 16th (BF) and at Moss Beach, SM, the following day (JRy).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

After nearly a month hiatus, the Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) was refound on the shore of Grizzly Bay, SOL. The new site at Joice Island/Montezuma Slough was accessible by boat only at highest tides, but an admiring crowd got to view the bird from Captain Dan's boat on the 22nd (MB; mob). A Common Poorwill was observed flying

over Tennessee Valley, MRN, on the 15th (DL), and 2 days later a couple Poorwills were heard calling just after dusk at Monte Bello OSP, SCL (DB, KPw).

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker continued all month in the tamarisks between Ed Levin Park and Calaveras Blvd, SCL, and a Red-naped Sapsucker at Sunol RP, ALA, did the same. A hybrid Red-breasted x Red-naped Sapsucker was tentatively ID'd in a Montclair, ALA, backyard on the 12th (TH). Other continuing rarities include the immature Northern Shrike at Cook Lane, south of Dixon, SOL, and the Mountain Bluebird flock on Patterson Pass Rd., ALA. A Townsend's Solitaire, first reported on Jan. 29, lingered through the 8th along Geary Rd., ALA (KPr; mob). A 2nd Solitaire turned up at Almaden Res., SCL, on the 10th (PB; mob).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Several out-of-range warblers remained in SF, the peninsula, and the S. Bay, including a Tennessee, 2 Palms, and Black-and-white Warblers; an American Redstart; and 2 Northern Waterthrush. A spectacular nightly flight of Short-eared Owls along Byron Springs Rd., CC, focused birders' attention on the surrounding area, which led to the discovery of a Lark Bunting on Feb. 11-24 (MM; mob). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak spent a few days at a Moss Beach, SM, feeder, starting the 21st (MD). Beginning Feb. 17, Yellow-headed Blackbirds were reported at Palo Alto Duck Pond, SCL (FV); Armstrong Rd. near Byron, CC (ADM); and Collinsville Rd., south of Birds Landing, SOL (CDL).

See Birding Resources at www.goldengateaudubon.org, for complete sightings data.

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater for assistance in compiling data.

Abbreviations for Observers: ADM, Al DeMartini; AH, Alan Hopkins; BF, Brian Fitch; BR, Bob Reiling; BRi, Bob Richmond; CDL, Calvin D. Lou; CG, Chris G.; DB, Debbi Brusco; DL, David Lukas; FV, Frank Vanslager; HC, Hugh Cotter; HL, Kevin Liberg; JRi, Jean Richmond; JRy, Jennifer Rycenga; KPr, Kathryn Parker; KPw, Kay Partelow; MB, Michelle Burke; MD, Marty Devine; MM, Mark Miller; PB, Patty Brown; PD, Peter Dramer; RS, Rich Stallcup; RT, Ron Thorn; SR, Steve Rottenborn; TE, Todd Easterla; TH, Tim Howe; VT, Vivek Tiwari; WW, Will Wilson

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; CP, County Park; Cr., Creek; Cyn., Canyon; EEC, Environmental Education Center; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L., Lake; MRN, Marin; Mt., Mount; N., North; NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; PRNS, Pt. Reyes National Seashore; Pt., Point; Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve

eucalyptus and ice plant, were brought on purpose. Many others, such as filaree and star thistle, arrived unintentionally. To facilitate development, the bay was filled, irrigation was installed, native trees were cut, and hills were leveled. At the same time, Lake Merritt in Oakland and Seal Rocks in San Francisco were among the first areas in the United States set aside as havens for wildlife. By the end of the 19th century, Audubon societies and public awareness helped push for more wildlife protection.

Early 20th-century birders blamed the decline of some species on the introduction of Argentine ants, opossums, and fox squirrels, as well as feral pets. As the century progressed, rampant development throughout the Bay Area destroyed crucial habitat. On the positive side, much more land is protected for wildlife than ever before, and very rarely are birds or other wildlife shot just for fun. The only bird still treated as vermin is the Rock Pigeon.

PROTECTION FOR WATERBIRDS AND RAPTORS

Some bird species increased in the Bay Area. Herons and egrets were hunted before enactment of the 1913 Migratory Bird Act. A 1917 article in the *Condor* listed Black-crowned Night-Heron, Great Blue Heron, and Green Heron as Alameda County



Common Raven.

Lee Karney

nesters, but only visitors in San Francisco. Irene Wheelock's 1902 *Birds of California* noted that both Great and Snowy Egrets were rare across California. By 1927 the Bay Area's only recent Great Egret sightings were in Suisun Marsh. A Snowy Egret was seen in San Mateo County. Egrets and herons are now regularly found in marshes and grassy areas.

The past nine decades have been good to buteos and corvids, which were once widely persecuted. In detailed, unpublished records for Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach from 1978, a birder noted that he rarely saw

a single American Crow and usually a handful of Western Scrub-Jays, but no Common Raven and no Steller's Jay. Steller's Jays now nest at the Golden Gate Park's Chain of Lakes, and over 200 immature ravens roost west of the park's North Lake.

Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks also adapted to the urban environment in San Francisco and the East Bay, and thrive without persecution. The Osprey and Peregrine Falcon came back with help from humans, especially the banning of DDT in 1972.

COMMON BIRDS, ONCE UNCOMMON

Birds common today were once newcomers. Northern Mockingbirds were first observed in San Francisco in 1932. The first Hooded Oriole nest in San Francisco was found in 1939, followed in two years by the first one in Oakland. In 1917, Golden Gate Audubon's first year, Mourning Doves were uncommon, but the species has done well in parks, gardens, and residential areas since. By the 1920s, they were breeding in Strawberry Canyon. In 1917 American Robins were nesting in San Francisco, but only 15 years before that, they bred only in the Sierra Nevada. Pygmy Nuthatches moved into San Francisco's mature evergreens after World War II, displacing the once regular Red-breasted.



Charles Denson

Canada Geese at Lake Merritt.

BIRD POPULATIONS continued on page 11

In Berkeley's Strawberry Canyon, Dark-eyed Juncos and Chestnut-backed Chickadees increased as grassy hill-sides became urban forest. House Wren, Bewick's Wren, Wrentit, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Bushtit were common in 1917. Now, only Bushtit is easily found. California Quail was once common and even tame in Strawberry Canyon. Since then, our state bird has nearly been extirpated in the urban Bay Area. The range of the Wild Turkey has expanded into the Berkeley Hills, and the California Towhee thrives in gardens and parks where the Spotted Towhee once lurked in dense scrub. A 1917 *Condor* article stated that any record of a breeding California Towhee in San Francisco would be "remarkable." Grasslands around the bay became covered with buildings and pavement, eliminating habitat for the White-tailed Kite, Western Meadowlark, Loggerhead Shrike, and Burrowing Owl.

AVIAN INVASIONS
AND DISPLACEMENTS

Brown-headed Cowbird and European Starling invasions swept California. San Francisco's first starling showed up in 1966. Five years after GGA's founding, Cowbirds were seen near Fremont. By 1926, two cowbird eggs were observed in a Common Yellowthroat nest at Lake Merced in San Francisco. Resident Hutton's Vireo, Yellow Warbler, and yellowthroat are among cowbird victims.

At Lake Merritt in Oakland, Canada Geese were unusual in the 1940s. By 1990 there were hundreds of breeding adults, and the population continues to expand. Lake Merritt, the country's first wildlife refuge, is a complex human-altered habitat that remains a good place to find Clark's, Western, Pied-billed, Eared, and Horned Grebes and ducks including Barrow's Goldeneye. In general, though, waterfowl

populations in the Bay Area are decreasing. Canvasback, Northern Pintail, both scaup, all three scoters, Green-winged Teal, and both goldeneyes winter here in smaller numbers than in the past. Many small land birds migrate to the tropics, where habitat has been destroyed. As a result, we see fewer migrant warblers, vireos, and flycatchers than birders did in 1917. Especially noticeable are the rare opportunities to hear the Olive-sided Flycatcher's order of "quick, three beers."

A list of San Francisco breeding species in a 1917 *Condor* commented on Bank Swallows: "Hundreds breed in the cliffs of Lake Merced, and a few along the ocean cliffs." In 1927 they were still nesting along the lake. Sometime after that, road building and development reduced the dwindling swallows' nesting sites to the cliffs at Fort Funston cliffs.

BIRD POPULATIONS continued on page 12

Please Vote!

The 2007 election for the membership to choose three directors for the Golden Gate Audubon Board of Directors will take place by written ballot. The board's Development Committee, with the approval of the board, has nominated the candidates listed below. Thirty-five ballots are needed to meet the quorum requirement of the GGA bylaws.

Members in good standing may vote by completing and signing the ballot form below and returning it to the GGA office, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702.

The ballot deadline is May 16, 2007.

NOREEN WEEDEN

Noreen Weeden is chair of the San Francisco Conservation Committee and also serves as secretary of the board. An avid birder, she has led our efforts to protect habitats along San Francisco's southern waterfront, including Pier 94 and Heron's Head Park.

AL PETERS

Al Peters has been treasurer of Golden Gate Audubon since 2003. He has 20 years of accounting experience and retired as chief financial officer of a Bay Area insurance firm. A former mayor of Piedmont, he serves on several nonprofit organization boards.

Ballot for Election of Golden Gate Audubon Directors

Ballots received by the May 16, 2007, ballot deadline will be counted in accordance with the choice specified for each candidate.

DIRECTOR NOMINEE	TERM ENDING	YES	NO
Al Peters	2010	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noreen Weeden	2010	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

MEMBER NAME

MEMBER SIGNATURE

A 1940 summary of birds on the U.C. Berkeley campus appeared in the *Condor*. Most of the prevalent species are the same today: American Robin, California Towhee, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Bushtit, Brewer's Blackbird, Dark-eyed Junco, Anna's Hummingbird, and House Finch led the list. The Black Phoebe came in only 26th on a list of birds most frequently seen. Sadly, some of the two dozen most common birds have become scarce: Spotted Towhee, California Quail, and Yellow Warbler. Most surprising was that

over a full year not a single crow or raven was observed, and the only recorded hawk was an American Kestrel.

ISLAND SANCTUARIES

The Farallon Islands support California's largest colony of seabirds, which have faced many challenges. In the 19th century, the commercial harvest of eggs had a particularly negative impact on Common Murre. In 1959 fewer than 6,000 murrelets nested on the islands, but by 1982 the species had recovered to 140,000. Seabird numbers

were also affected by feral rabbits, which occupied the islands for a century before being exterminated by 1975. The effects of climate change on Farallon seabirds could be harsh. Over the last two years, Cassin's Auklets had poor breeding seasons.

Alcatraz prison was decommissioned in 1963 and then incorporated into the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1973. Protection of the island helped bring back breeding birds: Western Gull, California Gull, Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemot, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Black Oystercatcher, along with Black Phoebe, and Anna's Hummingbird.

Among other winners are Cliff and Barn Swallows, which nest on manmade structures and are more common than ever around the Bay Area. The parrots of Telegraph Hill (*Aratinga erythrogenys*) currently number above 200 and seem to be here to stay. To end on a bright note, Townsend's Warblers are more common in the winter than even 40 years ago.

by Harry Fuller

This is one of a series of articles on topics related to Golden Gate Audubon's 90th anniversary. Harry Fuller is a professional birding guide and also a long-time GGA field trip leader and instructor. His website (www.towhee.net) contains a wealth of information on his trips and classes as well as on birding in the Bay Area and beyond. On April 20 in Berkeley, he will teach a class titled Tales of Western Ornithologists (see page 5).



Bob Lewis

Townsend's Warbler.

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